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WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon announced today that the Town of Golden Meadow will receive a \$850,000 grant and a \$258,000 low interest direct loan from the United States Department of Agriculture's Rural Development program. The federal funding will be used to construct a multi-use emergency response command center building that will provide first responders with a secure base of operations during catastrophic disasters. The USDA had originally awarded only \$358,000 in grant money and offered a \$750,000 loan. However, at Rep. Melancon's urging, the USDA reevaluated Golden Meadow's post-Katrina and Rita financial situation and revised the funding proposal to more than double the grant money offered, which the town will not be responsible for repaying.

"I am pleased the USDA Rural Development took a fresh look at Golden Meadow's request and used their discretion in re-evaluating what the town could realistically afford to contribute to this project," said Rep. Melancon. **"All too often, government bureaucracies get bogged down in rules and regulations and find reasons to say 'no,' instead of working with local people to find a way to say 'yes.' I am encouraged that the USDA was open to cooperating with us to cut the red tape and get this important project moving."**

In his letter to USDA's Undersecretary for Rural Development, Rep. Melancon reasoned that the need for Golden Meadow's emergency response center was clearly demonstrated during both Hurricane Katrina and Rita and further federal funding for the center would help the community better prepare for future hurricanes. Click [here](#) to view a copy of the letter.

Rep. Melancon has worked in Congress to further reduce the financial burden on local governments in south Louisiana struggling to recover after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Rep. Melancon lobbied to include language in the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill, passed by the House on March 23rd, to forgive 100% of the estimated \$1 billion in Community Disaster Loans owed by local governments in Louisiana. The CDLs were provided by the federal government to hurricane-affected local governments immediately following Katrina and Rita to help them continue daily operations, such as payroll for law enforcement and emergency responders. Many local governments do not have the ability to repay this massive debt, as their tax bases were devastated by the storms. Rep. Melancon has argued that, in the past, CDLs have been forgiven following many other major disasters, including Hurricane

Andrew and the September 11th terrorist attacks.

Rep. Melancon also worked to provide additional funding in the Supplemental to cover the 10% local funding match required for the \$3.4 billion in federal disaster relief grants included in the bill, which will be distributed by FEMA for rebuilding public infrastructure damaged by the storms. In addition, Rep. Melancon made sure language was included in the *Gulf Coast Hurricane Recovery Act of 2007*

, passed by the House on March 21st

, to cut the red tape that was preventing the state of Louisiana from using already appropriated federal funding to help local governments pay their local match for rebuilding projects. Federal law requires local governments to pay their match upfront before they can draw down federal funding, causing many of the estimated 23,000 disaster recovery projects in Louisiana to be put on hold because local governments don't have the resources to provide the match. Rep. Melancon also introduced legislation with House Majority Whip James E. Clyburn earlier this year to completely eliminate the local match requirement for Katrina and Rita disaster recovery projects, which would free up an additional \$800 million for Louisiana to invest in critical needs, like repairing and rebuilding police stations, fire stations and other important infrastructure.

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